

What's the Weather? Ask the Buoy

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Thanks to the National Data Buoy Center (NDBC), which is a part of the National Weather Service, ship drivers have another tool to help them avoid troubled waters. The latest coastal and offshore weather reports are just a phone call away with the new Dial-A-Buoy system, which consists of 65 buoys and 54 Coastal-Marine Automated Network (C-MAN) stations linked to the Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. These buoys and stations are located in the Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Lakes. With them, you can get wind direction, wind speed, wind gust, significant wave height, swell and wind-wave heights and periods, air temperature, and sea-level pressure.

There are several ways to find the station locations and identifiers:

- Using the internet (<http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/>), you can review site locations and get more information about Dial-A-Buoy.
- You can call Dial-A-Buoy at (228) 688-1948, then enter a fax number to receive a location map by following the prompts. You also can enter a latitude and longitude and find the closest station locations and identifiers.

If you access Dial-A-Buoy with a touch-tone or cell phone, enter the five-digit (or character) station identifier in response to the prompt. You then will



Navy photo by PH2 Jim Collins

An aerographer's mate inputs a forecast from the Meteorological Center for a weather brief. This information, coupled with reports available from a new weather service called Dial-A-Buoy, should improve the lives of ship drivers everywhere.

hear a computer-generated voice reading the latest buoy or station report.

Give it a try. You may find it an easy way to supplement weather information used with your navigation briefs or plans for other near-shore events. ☺

Information in this article is courtesy of David B. Gillhousen of the NDBC. He wrote about Dial-A-Buoy in the August 1998 issue of Mariners Weather Log.

At the time Cdr. Nicholas compiled this article, he was assigned to the Afloat Safety Programs Directorate at the Naval Safety Center.